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others which take a similar approach, is that the significance of history—the question of what actually happened, of how things actually were—tends to become swallowed up by the demands of hermeneutical philosophy. Philosophical conclusions are read back into historical scholarship, and the two become mixed to the detriment of both. This process is especially clear in Takeuchi's astonishing comments on pages 67–8 about the influence of the founders of the world religions; to suggest that Shinran and Dogen can provide illuminating “models” for the understanding of primitive Buddhism may be philosophically interesting but is certainly not good history. The Christian scholarly world has long since learned the dangers of taking Luther as an unproblematical guide to the thought of Paul, much less to that of Jesus. To arrive at a historical understanding of any phenomenon the only data which are relevant are historical data: to suggest otherwise, as do Takeuchi and the Kyoto school, is to blur important distinctions.

Despite these criticisms, Takeuchi's work has great value, as does that of the Kyoto school generally. It cannot be taken as historical scholarship, but once this is realised its value as creative philosophy becomes apparent.

Paul Griffiths

Paritta: A Historical and Religious Study of the Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity in Sri Lanka, by Lily de Silva. *Spolia Zeylanica*, Vol. 36, Part I. Colombo: National Museum, 1981. ISSN 0081-3745.

Lily de Silva's *Paritta* is a very welcome addition to the literature on the relationship between traditional Buddhist belief and practice. *Paritta*, a Theravāda protective ritual based mainly on texts from the Pāli Canon, is a centuries-old tradition extending from Sri Lanka throughout Southeast Asia. As de Silva points out (page xi), it has attracted the attention of Western scholars for over a century. Although anthropologists such as Spiro and Tambiah have dealt with *paritta* in wider ethnographic contexts, it has rarely been given due treatment by Buddhologists—at any rate, not with the depth, precision, and balance found in the present study.

The first four chapters deal with *paritta* texts, history, and religious motivations and contexts. The fifth chapter, as long as the previous four combined, is a detailed description of four types of contemporary *paritta* performances. Chapters Six and Seven, encompassing half the length of the book, consist of detailed discussions of some thirty-two "component parts" of the ritual, ranging from ritual objects like the *indrakīla* (a decorated central post, interpreted here as *axis mundi*) to behavioral aspects such as chanting and the *perahāra* procession with elephants. A short chapter on function and a conclusion follow. There are fifteen photographs of *paritta* performances and related objects, and a bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

Why, with a contents list that more than anything else evokes an atmosphere of thoroughly competent professionalism, should this book give rise to special enthusiasm among scholars of Buddhism? Just because the past history of Buddhist studies had made it very difficult to apply such a professional approach to this subject. We are still emerging from the scholarly age of an idealized "pure" Buddhism created by scholars in their own image, devoid of all traces of ritual and so-called "magic." This ideal religion was often identified with Theravāda, although certainly not the Theravāda practiced by traditional Theravāda monks and laypeople. However, in a scholarly atmosphere in which a large part of the Pāli Canon was tacitly decanonized and the beliefs and acts of traditional Buddhists subjected to charges of heresy or aristocratic disdain, it may have been convenient to deny or at least ignore the importance of ritual in Theravāda. Thus, while Mahāyāna ritual studies have grown, Theravāda rituals could be left to anthropologists and such others as were willing to stoop to examine the corrupt popular beliefs of the superstitious masses. In such a context, de Silva's study, solidly rooted in the tradition of Theravāda-oriented Buddhology, is an exciting new contribution.

de Silva deals with *paritta* squarely within the context of the Theravāda tradition. She faces the issue of canonicity (Chapter 1) matter-of-factly, without apologies or polemics against "later corruptions," merely pointing out (e.g., p. 9) clear individual cases of extracanonial additions to the texts. The historical discussion (pp. 11–22) is a similarly evenhanded, concise survey of canonical, commentarial, historical, and literary sources—sources which, by their very nature, take a positive orientation towards the ritual. The chapters on religious motivations, goals, and functions (Chs. 3–4, 7) are hardly laden with references to

the "common man" or "magic"; rather, the emphasis is, as it should be, on the orthodox Theravāda beliefs and concerns that lie at the heart of *paritta*.

de Silva's interpretations, in addition to the basic Theravāda-Buddhological approach, are strongly rooted in the scholarship and methods of Indology/Sinhala studies and the history of religions. Pāli, Sanskrit, and Sinhala sources are used so authoritatively that the collection of 32 separate articles comprising Chapters Six and Seven forms a reference work in itself, rather like part of an encyclopedia of Indo-Sinhalese culture. The history-of-religions approach is used selectively to add breadth and depth of interpretation, as in the intriguing discussion of the symbolism of the *indrakīla* (pp. 57–79). Finally, the chapter on contemporary practice in Sri Lanka (Chapter 5) contains ethnographic descriptions which many an anthropologist would find it difficult to surpass; the discussions of pageantry and dramatic elements (p. 46ff.; cf. pp. 135–138) and performances by laymen (p. 53) are particularly welcome.

Criticisms of the work fall in the general areas of sources, scope, and some aspects of interpretation. Surprisingly, except for references to individual *suttas* in the *nikāyas* and to the now out-of-print *Pāli Sinhala Pirit Pota*, there is no indication to the reader of editions and translations of the *paritta* text itself. Currently-available translations of the *Catubhāṇavāra* include Piya-dassi Thera's annotated translation, *The Book of Protection* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975), from the Sri Lankan tradition; and, from Thailand, Phra Khantipālo's translation in Chapter Two of *Pāli Chanting with Translations* (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press, 1974), which has the additional merit of including transliterated Pāli texts. *The Mirror of the Dhamma* (Colombo: Lake House, 1975) by Nārada Mahā Thera and Kassapa Thera includes transliterated texts and translations of the three *Mahāparitta* suttas, as well as the *Dhajagga* and the highly interesting *Mahājīnapaṇṇava*. A very useful Pāli source is *The Book of Chants* (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press, 1975), which includes not only the *Catubhāṇavāra* text (Chapter 8), but also arrangements for longer and shorter versions of the *paritta* ritual as performed in Thailand (Chs. 5–6).

The problem of secondary sources overlaps with that of the work's geographical scope. It may well have been a wise choice to limit the focus of the study to Sri Lanka (p. 3), where the author has had firsthand experience; but at least a brief review of secondary sources on *paritta* in other Theravāda traditions would have permitted discussion of some intercultural issues relevant

to Sri Lankan *paritta*—e.g., some of the wider issues raised by Melford Spiro in *Buddhism and Society* pertain to Sri Lanka, and might have formed the basis of a useful cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural dialogue.

The work's scope within its selected Sri Lankan context is more than adequate, although obviously not exhaustive given the concise format. For example, although Chapter Five covers the main types of contemporary *paritta* performances, it does not exhaust the entire range, from the few verses of "*pirit*" required in ceremonies like the *Upasampadā* ordination to six-month, round-the-clock *paritta* ceremonies with hundreds of thousands of repetitions. Likewise, anthropologists could wish for coverage of the performance variables of *paritta* rituals: social participation, organization, financing, and the like. Such additional details can await later, more comprehensive or specialized studies; the present work succeeds very well in covering the normative features basic to all *paritta* performances.

The work's Buddhological scope has more serious consequences for interpretation, in that Buddhological analysis is confined solely to the Theravāda tradition. When the Theravāda sources on a given theme or subject are exhausted, analysis turns to the use of general Indological and Sinhala studies material, without consideration of related aspects of non-Theravāda Buddhist traditions. Thus, for example, it is interesting and relevant to note the similarities and differences between *pirit nūla* and the Brahmanical and other Hindu sacred threads (pp. 87–89), but perhaps more to the point would be a comparison with the consecratory/protective ritual threads used in the Newar and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Similarly, the *Jinapañjara* texts (pp. 9–11) may indeed reflect "Tantric influence" (although the basic idea of a maṇḍala-like circle of directionally-arrayed guardian deities is also found in the *Āṭanāṭiya-sutta*), but, if so, the place to look for resemblances would logically seem to be in the *kāya-maṇḍala* visualizations of Vajrayāna Buddhism, rather than in the practices of and literature on the Hindu tantras. Although the practical problems of access to recent scholarship may account for some omissions, we might nevertheless hope that, other things being equal, the *axis mundi* where Buddhist studies begin and end is Buddhism itself.

On the other hand, some of the problematic interpretations found here may reflect the residual influence of "idealized-Theravāda-ism," with its automatic tendency to look outside the Buddhist tradition for evidences of Hindu corruption in matters of ritual. Another possible sign of such residual influence may

be the curious omission from the discussion of early Pāli sources of Buddhagoṣa's list of "efficacious" *paritta* in the *Visuddhimagga* (XIII: 31), and of the traditional attribution to him of the authorship of the three commentaries which are our most important source on early *paritta* ritual practices (pp. 17–18). Given the idealists' cherished belief that ritual is only for the superstitious masses, it is enlightening to note that the greatest scholar of the Theravāda tradition was an apparent proponent of *paritta* ritual—and, as the author points out, so likewise was the great reformer of Sinhala Theravāda, Vāliṇṇa Saraṇāṅkara Saṅgharāja (pp. 149–150).

Such criticisms may apply more to the accumulated karma of Buddhist studies than to the present work. In fact, there are very few cases where interpretations are open to serious question within the book's own interpretational framework. One such case is the article on the *Magul* (sic.; i.e., *Māgul*) *Bera* (pp. 112–113), which, as its name (= *maṅgala bheri*) indicates, is an "auspicious" drum and its music used for the *śabda pūjā* offering of pleasant sounds to the *Triratna* during the *paritta* performance. Citations from the Vedas and Joseph Campbell notwithstanding, Buddhism very seldom makes use of the "magic of noise" to drive away evil spirits. Another doubtful case is the anticolonialist hypothesis used to explain the substitution of *Mahāmaṅgalasutta* for *Dhajaggasutta* in the *Mahāpiri* (pp. 14–15). Far from stressing "inspiration from political leadership" (15), the point of *Dhajaggasutta* is that a royal banner, even that of the king of the gods, is an inferior standard to follow when compared to the *Triratna*. Since the *sutta*, if anything, denigrates rather than glorifies royal leadership, it is difficult to see any connection between colonial destruction of royal institutions and the downgrading of the *sutta* to a lower level of esteem.

Given the overall high quality of this work, such criticisms are of minor importance. It provides, for the scholar of Theravāda, a solid investigation of an important part of the tradition; and, for the investigator of other Buddhist traditions and cultures, thorough evidence that followers of Theravāda are Buddhists in the full religious sense of the term, rather than merely Victorian idealist-rationalist philosophers and corrupt peasants. We hope it will inspire some new approaches to the comparison of Buddhist ritual in different cultures and *yānas*, and serve as a bridge to the further disciplinary integration of Buddhist studies.

Ter Ellingson